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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN - RELIGION LAW AMENDMENTS PASS
MAZHILIS, HEAD FOR SENATE

REF: ASTANA 1850

¶1. (U) On September 24, the Mazhilis -- the lower house of parliament -- passed at a second reading a package of amendments to Kazakhstan's religion law. There were no significant changes made to the legislation during the reading. The bill will now move to the Senate for consideration, although it is not yet clear when the Senate will begin discussing it. If the Senate approves the legislation with no changes, it will go to President Nazarbayev, who can sign it into law or veto it.

¶2. (SBU) Comment: Key NGO leaders told us previously that they view the current text of the legislation as "deficient" and an "infringement on religious freedom." They plan to lobby the Senate and, if necessary, the Presidential Administration, with the hope of stopping it. We will work with like-minded OSCE partners in urging the Senate to fully take into account ODIHR's recommendations as it reviews the legislation. End Comment.

MILAS